

NEWCOMERS GUIDE

POINTS OF CONTACT

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MARFORSOUTH**

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Spouses Group

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What I Wish I'd Known...

UNOFFICIAL GUIDE TO LIVING IN MIAMI
COMPILED BY THE SPOUSES OF MARFORSOUTH

2013/2014 EDITION

Welcome to MARFORSOUTH

This guide was compiled by the MARFORSOUTH spouses, in the hope that you will never have to say, "I wish I'd known that!" It is made up of notes and suggestions for making your transition and life here in Miami easier and more enjoyable.

It's a catalog of things we learned the hard way and sincerely hope will be helpful to you and your family. From medical to travel and housing to childcare, this area is different from living near a traditional military

installation.

That said, the information presented here is formed by our own views and personal experience. Should you come across any new information while stationed here, please feel free to pass that information to your Family Readiness Officer so that we can always keep the information new and fresh for everyone transitioning to the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale area.



So you have orders to Miami...Now What?!

Beautiful beaches and tropical weather....who wouldn't like to live here? A vibrant and energetic place where a melting pot of cultures and languages abound. Are you ready to transition to sunny South Florida?

While a PCS move always

has it's trials and tribulations, moving to this area takes on a different set of challenges. In the pages that follow are tips, hints, information as well as resources that can be helpful to you as you start the PCS process.

This information came

not only from spouses who have lived here for a few years, but also from spouses who recently PCS'd and brought us some new lessons learned.

Welcome to Miami!



Photo By: Lance Cpl. Paul Peterson

**Be sure to call the
Housing Office to
request/Receive an
Electric Deposit
Waiver Form for
Florida Power and
Light**

Housing

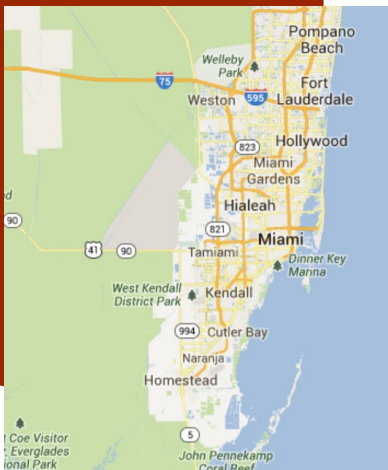
MARFORSOUTH and the SOUTHCOM area does not offer traditional “military housing”. You will need to find a place to live on your own. With that in mind here are a few things to consider:

- **Deposits** Very high in this area. Usually consist of First, Last AND Security Deposit; a total which can be greater than \$6-7000!
- Many Communities are “gated” and require the **Homeowner’s Association approval of tenants**. Once you have signed a lease, it may take 2-3 weeks to actually receive HOA approval.
- Utilize the Housing office at the Army Garrison to **review housing contracts BEFORE signing** (it was not uncommon during the height of the recent recession for owners to “bail” leaving tenants stranded in foreclosed homes). There is a new Florida law that helps protect tenants from foreclosed home force-outs, but still ensure that your Realtor or the housing office checks ownership status on a home you may rent.
- **Rentals—USE a Realtor!!** It does not cost you a dime to have a Realtor help you in your search! They generally get paid a one time fee of 50% of the monthly rent by the homeowner so they will WORK to help find you a place. Many will “preview” homes for you and send you additional pictures. Your bank or insurance company might have recommendations on Realtors as well. Check with the Housing office to make sure there have been no complaints against any Realtors used in the past.
- **Renters Insurance—HAVE IT!** Not only are you out in the community but you are also in Hurricane Alley...protect yourself and your belongings.
- If purchasing a home there may be some **insurance requirements** you might not have thought of: wind, flood, hazard, sink hole, etc
- When looking for a place, take into consideration any **Hurricane evacuation routes** and how easily accessible they may be from your location.
- Sign up for an use **AHRN.com**—a great place to find military friendly rentals with reduced deposits
- If Leasing from an Apartment Complex—ask if they have **Active Military Duty Discounts** on rent/deposits and administration fees

Location Location Location

When looking for a place keep the following in mind:

- If you have children, check out the schools first (see schools page)
- While a place may look relatively close to MARFORSOUTH, commute times can be deceiving due to traffic.
- Look to see if there are tolls along the route to MARFORSOUTH as this is an additional expense
- Make contact with the Military sponsor to see if there are areas more populated with Military — example: Pembroke Pines area of Broward.



WHAT I WISH I'D KNOWN...

Schools



- There are relatively few “A” graded public schools, but they do exist. You may just have to live a little further away, increasing drivetime into Mar-ForSouth
- There are Several quality magnet school options for older

(high school) kids. Call and check to see if they have “military child” preference for admission.

- A good place to get good information on schools is www.greatschools.org
- Florida is an Interstate Compact signee...check below to see what that means for you as a military family!

- SOUTHCOM has School Liaison Officer!
<http://www2.southcom.mil/usag-miami/sites/mwr/mwr-schools.htm>
or
305-437-2225



What you need to register your child/ren for School

- Make sure to get a SEALED copy of your kids transcripts prior to departing current duty stations.
- Go to your local school district for (whole file) for child; same w/ immunization (critical to registration).
- Proof of age: birth certificate, passport
- Medical exam within the 12 previous months to registration
- You will have 30 days from the date of registration to provide a utility bill/lease to prove that your child is in the requisite district.
- Copy of 504 form school (if applicable) – (i.e. allergies, broken arm, AD/HD...).
- Copy of IEP (if applicable)

Immunizations must be listed on a Florida State-Specific form. You may take your current shot record to the Clinic at SouthCom and they WILL transcribe the record for you. DO NOT TAKE “we don’t do that” for an answer!! Per the Colonel in charge of Medical, the Clinic WILL provide this service for dependents free of charge.



DadeSchools.net
giving our students the world

Dade County Schools

Immunization requirements:

http://comprehensivehealthservices.dadeschools.net/immune_require.asp

Registration Info:

http://attendanceservices.dadeschools.net/reg_require.asp



BrowardSchools.com

Broward County Schools

Immunization requirements:

<http://www.browardschools.com/info/shots.htm>

Registration Info:

<http://www.browardschools.com/info/register.htm>

ChildCare

- CDC will give referrals for home care centers and can provide list of emergency child care providers
- Check out Sittercity.com and Care.com for Nanny's and night nurses
- CDC provides baby-sitting training/certification and referrals as well as resources for single parents.
- CYS/CDC Contact #: 305.437.2633

Florida Laws

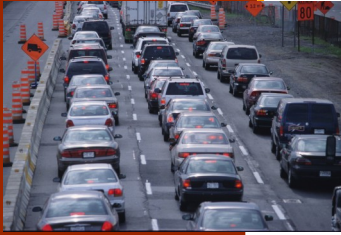
Babysitters must be a minimum of 16 years old. 16-18 yo babysitters may not watch more than 3 children or for longer than 24 hours. Babysitters should have gone through a certification course.

Florida does not have an age set for leaving children home alone, although welfare and maturity of child “should be considered”.

State of Florida Immunization Guide:

Schools, Daycare and In-Home Daycare Providers:

http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctr/immune/schoolguide.pdf



Transportation and Driving

Expect your insurance to increase unless you are currently covered by insurance in another "big city"! South Florida car insurance rates tend to be higher

than other states.

Contact your insurance company and find out if you can keep your current vehicle plates/state insurance as a military member. Some

Drive Times and Toll Roads

Approximate Drive Times in RUSH HOUR Traffic			
Area	Distance	Traffic Time	Toll cost per day*
Doral	0 - 5 miles	20	\$0.00
Coral Gables	5 - 10 miles	20-30	\$0.00
Miramar	15-20 miles	30-40	Plate: \$1.25 SunPass: \$1.02
Pembroke Pines	15-20 miles	35-45	Plate: \$1.25 SunPass: \$1.02
Kendall	Over 20 miles	25-35	Plate: \$2.00 SunPass: \$1.53
Weston	Over 25 miles	30-45	Plate: \$1.25 SunPass: \$1.02
Homestead	Over 30 miles	45-60	Plate: \$3.25 SunPass: \$2.55
Ft Lauderdale	Over 30 miles	45-50	Plate: \$2.50 SunPass: \$2.04

* SunPass Toll Roads can be avoided but will significantly increase drive time –Prices as of 1 JULY 2013



Travel in and around south Florida often includes toll roads....which **DO NOT ACCEPT CASH!!** You will be billed via your license plate registered address if you do not have a SunPass mounted on your vehicle. If your car is registered out of state, the bill will go there and can cause fines/tickets if not paid on time. You can purchase a sticker or a transponder at many local pharmacy and grocery chains. Manage your account online at :

<https://www.sunpass.com/index>

Be aware

Currently there are no "hands Free" laws in Florida, so expect drivers to be on the phone, texting, or both! There is a push to pass a law banning texting and driving but it has not passed as of yet.

Drivers in South Florida drive fast and aggressive! Oh and they love to use their car horns!!!

Double check your concealed weapons license if you plan on having one in your vehicle. Check for state to state reciprocity or if you need to recertify.

Gas

Search "Check Local Gas Prices" online to find sites/apps to give up to date info

Avg cost per gallon regular Unleaded: \$3.58 (7/11/2013)

Parking

Many neighborhoods do not have adequate parking due to shortened driveways. Be aware that you may have to park on the side of the street. Check to make sure that you are following any parking "neighborhood guidelines" as contracted tow trucks like to prowl those specific neighborhoods

Maintenance

Make sure the place you take your vehicle is licensed properly!! Do not fall for the scam of someone telling you they can fix a dent right where your vehicle is/at your house....they only take cash, give fake phone numbers, work later into the evening so that quality of work is less noticable and do awful work!

Spouses have 10 days from when you move to Florida to update your driver's license. This is NOT covered under MSRRRA and must be done by all spouses.

Healthcare

THERE IS NO MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITY FOR DEPENDENTS AT US-SOUTHCOM!!

The Clinic is for uniformed personal only

- No dental treatment facility (everyone is seen in town).
- Try and get a copy of your medical record prior to departing current duty station (may take several weeks).

•Many MTF's will no longer let you "hand carry" your records (ie. Release the physical records to you). More often they will request that you provide a Release of information form as to where you would like your records sent! You can have them sent to SouthCom as you will need your records when you find your Civilian Primary Care Manager out in town.

Again it can take 6-8 weeks for records to arrive at SouthCom

To find out more info on getting the form from SouthCom call

305-437-2225



Miami SOUTHCOM Clinic
9301 NW 33rd St
Phone: 1-800-444-5445;

TRICARE Info

- This is a different environment since there is no MTF for dependents....make sure you make an appointment to see the TRICARE representative at USSOUTHCOM.
- TRICARE Rep can:
 - Give you a list of TRICARE providers (list of closest)
 - Provide list of those providers with the fewest complaints
 - Provide list of three (local) TRICARE sites w/ contact info!
- Understand that not every provider is as knowledgeable about TRICARE billing codes as those in "military towns". When you get a bill with what seems to be a high copay, etc be sure to try and run it by the TRICARE rep to ensure that you are not being overbilled!

Tricare Service Center --TRICARE South

Health Benefits Advisor

305-437-1394

Tricare Representative

305-437-1767

<http://hmd.humana-military.com/ProvLocator/TSCLocator.aspx>

Make sure you have transferred your TRICARE region to **TRICARE SOUTH**, the easiest way is to call and let your current region know you are transferring!

Stateside

TRICARE North RegionHealth Net Federal Services, LLC1-877-TRICARE (1-877-874-2273)

TRICARE West RegionUnitedHealthcare Military & Veterans1-877-988-WEST (1-877-988-9378)

Overseas

TRICARE Eurasia-AfricaTRICARE Overseas Program (TOP) Regional Call Center +44-20-8762-8384 (overseas)1-877-678-1207 (stateside)

TRICARE Latin America and CanadaTOP Regional Call Center +1-215-942-8393 (overseas)1-877-451-8659 (stateside)

TRICARE PacificTOP Regional Call Centers Singapore: +65-6339-2676 (overseas) 1-877-678-1208 (stateside)

Sydney: +61-2-9273-2710 (overseas)

Make sure to contact the Facebook/Yahoo Spouse groups to find out who established spouses recommend for various services!! (listed on back page)

Shopping



There is no commissary...it is highly recommended that wherever you grocery shop you get that stores "discount" card!!! This can save you money on gas as well.

There is no exchange, only a small 7 Day Store (AAFES is available on-line)



Five major malls and lots of outlet shopping opportunities.



Entertainment and Travel

- Obtain passports (ideally prior to arrival): lots of affordable travel opportunities.
- Be sure to understand Travel (risk) awareness: USG policies and USSOUTHCOM activities are not universally applauded. Risks from Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) should not be dismissed.
- SOUTHCOM has a Leisure Travel Services office with discounted tickets.

Leisure Travel Services

Formerly Information, Tickets & Registration (ITR) Office

Hours of Operation:

Monday – Friday: 8:30 AM – 4 PM
305-437-1595

So much to do!!!

Beaches
Golf
Fishing
Cruises
Arts
Concerts/Theater
Major Sports Teams
Art Deco District/South Beach
Everglades National Park
2 Major Airports (may be cheaper to fly out of FLL)

Traditional vs Non-Traditional Installation

USSOUTHCOM in a non-traditional installation...here are some items that you will NOT find here that you may be used to:

- Commissary
- Military Treatment Facility
- Department of Defense (DoD) Schools
- Housing

- MCX/Uniform Store
- Chapels
- Vehicle/Wood Hobby Shops
- Base Theaters
- Community Centers
- Recreational Centers
- Pools
- Libraries

- Gas Stations
- Rec Gear Rentals
- Special Events
- Navy Marine Corps Relief Society
- Counseling program
- Families Overcoming Combat Under Stress (FOCUS)
- Sports (Intramural, Varsity, Youth)

Unit Contact Info



U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South
9301 NW 33rd St.
Doral, Florida 33172

Family Readiness Officer
Phone: 555-555-5555
Fax: 555-555-5555
E-mail: someone@example.com

If the Active Duty Marine/Sailor has yet to hear from the assigned sponsor you can call the **MARFORSOUTH GI** at (305) 437-2600/2601 or **DSN: 567-2600/2601**.

Sites to Checkout

MarForSouth eMarine:

MarForSouth: <http://www.marforsouth.marines.mil/UnitHome.aspx>

MarForSouth Welcome Aboard: <http://www.marforsouth.marines.mil/WelcomeAboard.aspx>

USSOUTHCOM Newcomer Tool: <https://extranet.southcom.mil/newcomers/>

USSOUTHCOM Spouses Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/131929440155922>

USSOUTHCOM Newcomer Orientation info: <http://www2.southcom.mil/usag-miami/sites/mwr/mwr-fsc-relocation.htm>

Do you have useful information you believe should be added to this guide? Was there something you learned while transitioning down here that you would like to pass along to new incoming spouses? Please email the Family Readiness Officer with the title "Info for What I wish I knew" and provide your lessons learned!!

Once again, Welcome Aboard MarForSouth, we hope that this guide gave you some valuable information and insights!